



AETC News Clips

Altus AFB, Okla.



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Making an impact

*by Staff Sgt. Monique Randolph
97th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs*

ALTUS AIR FORCE BASE, Okla. The long Labor Day weekend was cut short for some members of Altus Air Force Base. During a time of rest set aside to honor America's working class, these 10 men were working to relieve the suffering of victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, La.

Members of the 97th Operations Group, 56th Airlift Squadron, 97th Maintenance Directorate and Detachment 2 here volunteered to participate in a two-day humanitarian mission Sunday and Monday. Over

the two days, the aircrew transported nearly 269 thousand pounds of equipment and 25 passengers to New Orleans in support of relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

"This was an opportunity to make an impact," said Lt. Col. John Sasse, commander of Detachment 2 and a pilot on the mission. "It's worth every moment to be gone over a holiday weekend. It just gives you a good feeling."

"There are a lot of desperate people needing help," said Tech. Sgt. Rob Johnson, evaluator loadmaster with the 97th Operations Group and primary loadmaster on the



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mission. "[In these types of missions,] we usually assist people from other nations, so it really hits home when you can help Americans; the people who support you. I'd rather be out helping people than sitting at home watching it on [television]."

The aircrew departed Altus AFB around 10 a.m. Sunday headed to Holloman AFB, N.M. There, the crew uploaded more than 145 thousand pounds of equipment including generators, tents and environmental control units to be transported to New Orleans Naval Air Station. They also picked up a four-man "bare base" team from Holloman's 49th Materiel Maintenance Group.

The 49th MMG members are only a small portion of the overall manpower being sent to New Orleans to set up a tent city that could potentially house 1,100 troops from all military services, said Master Sgt. Samuel Tran, 49th MMG

Structural Maintenance Element chief. More bare base teams are expected to arrive from Holloman AFB; Scott AFB, Ill.; Luke AFB, Ariz.; and Patrick AFB, Fla. over the next few days.

At the Naval Air Station, the runways were filled with helicopters and aircraft from all branches of service. Both ground and air buzzed with activity as the aircraft took off and landed every few minutes.

Once the Altus aircrew landed at NAS, they offloaded the equipment with the help of the Texas Air National Guard's 136th Airlift Wing. The 136th AW, located at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Fort Worth, Texas, had just arrived in New Orleans the day before.

Offloading equipment at NAS was no easy task, said Maj. Larry Nance, 56th AS C-5 pilot and aircraft commander for the mission.

"[At NAS], they had the bare minimum of equipment



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"[At NAS], they had the bare minimum of equipment needed to offload the C-5, and with so many planes to service, the resources of the base are strained," he said.

Normally, for an offload of this size, the crew would have used K-loaders, but they had to use two bare tine forklifts instead, said Tech. Sgt. Tony Brown, a loadmaster with the 56th AS.

"[Using forklifts for this type of offload] is a tedious job and one of the most dangerous things we do because it requires lots of communication and coordination," he said. "Using bare tine forklifts is a last resort."

Following the offload, the crew, originally scheduled to return to Altus Sunday night, diverted to Charleston AFB, S.C., for crew rest. At 3 p.m. Monday, they were alerted of another mission. They departed Charleston Monday evening for Pope AFB, N.C., to pick up 124 thousand

pounds of equipment and troops to transport to Louis Armstrong International Airport in New Orleans.

"It's exciting to be able to help out in the U.S.; to help Americans directly," Major. Nance said. "We don't often get that opportunity because Altus is a training base. I love my family, and I love being at home, but I'm also an airlifter. My family understands that," and they are supportive."



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(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Monique Randolph)

Tech. Sgt. Rob Johnson, an evaluator loadmaster with the 97th Operations Group at Altus Air Force Base and primary loadmaster on the C-5 mission, guides a HUMVEE onto the C-5 during the upload at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., Sept. 5.



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Altus conducts first floor-loaded evacuation

by Master Sgt. Eugene Bird
97th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

ALTUS AIR FORCE BASE — A 97th Air Mobility Wing C-17 conducted the first C-17 floor-loaded emergency evacuation out of Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., Sept. 1.

During this mission, the 58th Airlift Squadron C-17 aircrew transported 204 Airmen from Keesler AFB to Sheppard AFB, Texas.

The Airmen are technical training students whose training was interrupted by Hurricane Katrina. In a subsequent mission, a C-17 from Altus evacuated 233 more students.

In addition to providing emergency evacuation, the C-17 crews delivered three tons of supplies to Keesler for employees and families who fell victim to the hurricane.

Members of the Jackson County Department of Human Services

delivered the supplies to Altus AFB logistics teams Aug. 27.

DHS director Rick Steen said the agency's workers came to a quick consensus that they needed to help the day after the hurricane passed over the Gulf Coast.

They began collecting goods Aug. 30 including water, toiletries, food, medicine and other supplies.

"When we got the media involved, the Altus Times, KWHW, KEYB, and others — it started rolling in," Mr. Steen said.

Members of the 97th Logistics Readiness Squadron packed the goods to air freight standards and transported them to a staging area to ship on the next flight to the region.

According to Col. Linda Medler, 97th Mission Support Group commander, the base rushed to assist in transporting the humanitarian goods. Since Thursday, flights from Altus AFB have been delivering



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equipment to New Orleans and evacuating hundreds of people.

DHS family members boxed up supplies from Altus, Vernon, Lawton and surrounding counties and cities.

"Our security forces welcomed them and checked the donations for hazardous materials. I had asked our services squadron commander, Lt. Col. Ken Olsen, to take a look at the supplies, and they had matched what was needed, so like the Air Force does we jumped on it," Colonel Medler said.

Colonel Olsen said he was awed by the effort.

"Mr. Steen and the folks downtown were so proactive. How heartwarming, they did this without any prompting. We went down to survey how much they had. Donations were stacked all the way to the ceiling," Colonel Olsen said.

"It's a great community. There's no dividing line between the City of Altus and Altus Air Force Base. We just work together to make things happen," Colonel Medler said.

Colonel Medler recently deployed to Keelser AFB, along with the 97th Civil Engineer

Squadron commander Lt. Col. Karl Freerks, 97th Mission Support Group superintendent Chief Master Sgt. Robert Walker and 20 other wing and Air Education and Training Command members.

The team will stand up the 97th Air Expeditionary Group at Keesler AFB to assume control of the Humanitarian relief effort for the Biloxi and Mississippi Gulf region, according to 97th Air Mobility Wing command chief Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Narofsky.



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(U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Eugene Bird)

Air Force technical training students at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., line up to board a C-17 Globemaster III from the 58th Airlift Squadron at Altus Air Force Base enroute to Sheppard AFB, Texas, Sept. 1. The C-17 aircrew flew to Keesler to evacuate students after the base was lashed by Hurricane Katrina.



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Altus delivers supplies to Gulf Coast

"But we don't normally get to help Americans. We're glad to finally use our training to help our own people."

**RAYMOND
BRZOWSKI**
CHIEF MASTER SGT.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawton Constitution reporter Jared Kaltwasser accompanied a crew from Altus Air Force Base on a relief mission to the ravaged Gulf Coast last weekend.

BY JARED KALTWASSER
STAFF WRITER
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EVERYWHERE — A crew of 11, all very experienced at their work, left Altus Air Force Base in a C-5 Sunday morning on a typical mission to deliver supplies and personnel to victims of a catastrophic natural disaster.

Yet this trip was very different.
It was different because Altus is a

training base. Trips like these are few and far between.

It was different because the flights they made were considerably shorter and much more frequent.

It was different because the helpless, homeless victims of Hurricane Katrina were fellow Americans.

For the pilots of last weekend's mission, the day begins about 5:45 a.m. In the midst of their 48-hour alert, the three get a call for a mission that had been inevitably in the back of their minds.

"We got an alert call at 5:45, an hour to the squadron and you find out where you're going," says Maj. Larry Nance, one of the mission's pilots. "That's how pretty much every mission is."



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Accompanying them are two engineers, three loadmasters and two members of Altus' civilian maintenance crew. Loadmaster Tech. Sgt. Rob Johnson is expecting to go to the hurricane zone.

"I did expect it because I'd been watching the news," Johnson says. "Usually the news tells us what we're going to do next. There's a lot of desperate people. I'm not nervous about that at all. It's all about helping people in destitute situations."

The massive C-5 the crew will be taking off in is the crown jewel of the Air Force's transport fleet. The largest aircraft in the world, the plane is 80 yards long and more than 20 yards high. Its maximum cargo load is 270,000 pounds,

which it can carry while flying a maximum speed of 518 miles per hour. The aircraft opens from the front or back; it can tilt in both directions to ease loading and unloading.

"It's a beautiful thing to see your cargo all in, engine running," says Lt. Col. John Sasse. "I've unloaded it in 15 to 20 minutes. The standard joke is you want to keep it moving. Crews are really its only limiting factor."

That's because the plane can refuel in the air, Sasse says. Its crew, however, has to take a 12-hour rest after every 24 hours on the job.

The other important factor, however, is the plane's massive size. The C-5 can only be parked in certain locations. Otherwise, they'd never get out.

"We're so big we can taxi and not be able to turn around," says Capt. Pete Gross, another pilot on the mission.

"A C-5 you can get on the ground and almost have more trouble than in the air," adds Sasse.

Picking up supplies

Plans early on are fluid, but finally come to rest on flying to Holloman Air Force Base, just southwest of Alamogordo, N.M., in the south-central part of the state. There, the crew will pick up 145,000 pounds worth of tents, generators, air conditioners and cots — all the makings of a base camp — which they'll then take to the heart of the relief efforts, New Orleans.

The plane takes off just before 10 a.m. Two hours later, the loading job at Holloman is beginning. Now on the ground, the loadmasters take over.

While the pilots prepare the next flight plan, it's the three loadmasters who supervise the upload of 145,000 pounds of cargo. The first task is flipping over panels in the flooring. The underside of the panels have wheels, allowing cargo of up to five tons to slide into position.

With three experienced loadmasters (who train other loadmasters back at Altus), the upload goes smoothly — taking around two hours. While the plane is refueled, the crew takes a van to an on-base McDonald's. They can't leave until there's room for them in New Orleans.

Off to the Gulf Coast

When the crew arrives back at the plane, it's almost time to go. The plane taxis around Holloman's runway before its four TF39 turbofan engines thrust the plane into the air. In addition to the cargo, four members of the 49th Materiel Maintenance Group ride in the plane's cabin — one of them on an unlikely journey to the region he calls home.

"It's very different, especially being from here," says Tech. Sgt. Demetrius Rankin, a



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Also helping unload is a group of airmen from the 136th Aerial Port Squadron, based at Carswell Air Force Base, in Fort Worth, Texas.

His family, however, has already begun the process of moving forward. His parents had some damage to their home, but his grandmother lost everything.

New Orleans touchdown

At 4:27 p.m., Tech. Sgt. Tony Brown turns up the lights, waking the tired passengers just as they'd requested. The New Orleans area is just ahead. Those who can, jockey for a peek outside two small, round windows. The plane's direction makes it difficult to see the destruction from the air. Instead, the crew sees a mix of water and grass, none too sure what's supposed to be there and what isn't.

"I take it this is the gulf right here," Brown says.

"I don't know. I see a lot of water, but I can't see anything in it," Johnson replies.

Soon the sights of water and flooding are replaced with the makings of the impromptu nerve center for much of the recovery effort. The New Orleans Naval Air Station had become the entrance point for many cargo drop-offs and the departure point for many rescue workers and some evacuees. C-5s, C-17s, Blackhawk helicopters and school buses line the runways of the station. Blink, and you'd miss a landing.

The pilots will have to do their next flight planning from the cockpit. Down on the ground however, the loadmasters find themselves in a dicey situation. The cargo had been loaded onto the plane from a K-Loader. The "K" stands for how many thousands of pounds the vehicle can hold.

"So let's say a 25 K-Loader can hold 25,000 pounds," Johnson explains.

Shaped like a flatbed truck, the apparatus can be raised, lowered or tilted to facilitate the loading of many different pallets of cargo at once.

"The K-Loader is what

we primarily use. Next is rollerized-tine forklifts (forklifts with rollers). The most dangerous is the bare-tine fork lift," Johnson said.

Sunday at the Naval Air Station, all that are available are two of the latter. Each forklift can carry a maximum of 10,000 pounds. The largest parcel of cargo the Altus crew needs to unload is 9,800 pounds.

"You have to make sure everyone's on the same page," Johnson says.

Unloading the cargo

Some of the cargo is on wheels and it can be rolled out on its own. But the heaviest of the cargo makes for a tense few hours. Gross, a former enlisted airmen, who has worked at various positions on the C-5 including loadmaster, is consulted for help.

Also helping unload is a group of airmen from the 136th Aerial Port Squadron, based at Carswell Air Force Base, in Fort Worth, Texas.



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They're none too sure how long they'll be staying in bayou country.

"I think I live here now," says Sr. Airman Kevin Palmer. His squadron was originally told they'd be doing security work. "When we got here they told us 'Don't carry your guns.' We've been unloading ever since, and we're the only ones doing it."

The frustration on the ground highlights the difficult working conditions in New Orleans. To make matters worse, the humidity is almost overwhelming.

Trouble on horizon

As night begins to fall, the crew retreats to the cabin of the plane to await their next orders. Nance says the plan is to fly to Louis Armstrong International Airport, just a few miles away. But as the crew gets on the radio inside the cockpit, confusion breeds trouble.

As Brown, Johnson and members of the civilian maintenance crew discuss the difficulty of unloading the cargo with inferior tools, loadmaster Tech. Sgt. T. J. Tijerina brings them news nearly impossible to believe.

Grin on his face, he announces the unthinkable.

"They want us to load this stuff back up, take it to the international airport and unload it there," Tijerina says.

To his crewmates, it's obvious he's kidding. A few minutes later, however, an incredulous Tijerina repeats his claim; this time it's plain he's serious.

Off to South Carolina

For the crew, the request is outrageous. It soon becomes clear, however, that it's also impossible. The cargo is already off into the night and it would be next to impossible to retrieve it.

Luckily, they won't have to. After realizing his mistake, the air traffic controller orders the plane to Charleston, S.C., where they'll spend the night and await further orders.

With their work time approaching 24 hours, the crew takes up residence at a hotel in Charleston, their plane parked at the nearby Charleston Air Force Base. Arriving after midnight, the crew's next orders won't come in until at least 3 p.m. local time. Shortly before their

alert begins, members of the crew walk across the street to a Popeye's restaurant for lunch. They know it's the closest they'll get to New Orleans cuisine on this trip to the Crescent City.

When the crew's alert does come, they're ordered to Pope Air Force Base, near Fayetteville, N.C. There, the cargo will be trucks, trailers and 21 passengers. This trip's load comes out to just under 124,000 pounds.

This cargo is considerably easier to load. After all, most of it can drive itself into the plane's cargo space. Still, the crew has a long wait before they can take off. They have to wait until there's room on the Louis Armstrong runway.

Picking up soldiers

As they wait to go back to Louisiana, Gross recalls the difficult air traffic situation last time.

"It was kind of like 'You guys are out on your own,'" Gross said. "Then once you're in the air, they all see us, and we get a clearance from them. If the weather wasn't good, it would be very difficult. We weren't even in a parking lot, we were just on



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the runway."

As night begins to fall on the North Carolina horizon, the crew takes off for New Orleans a second time, this time to the international airport and the scene of a makeshift hospital and operations center.

This trip's passengers are 21 soldiers from Fort Bragg, N.C., part of the 2nd Aviation Brigade, 82nd Aviation Battalion. They'll be helping with terrain surveys, evacuations and VIP support, says Lt. Jerry Cole, battalion chemical officer.

The cargo is unloaded just as quickly as it had been unloaded. And the crew awaits their next orders. It could be taking evacuees to a safe air force base out of state. Or it could be going home. Johnson says he doesn't want the latter.

"I know that there's people out there that need all the help they can get," he said. "I want to be out there as long as I can. It's a fine line because you've still got folks at home that need to be trained, we can get folks qualified to do this work."

Home to Altus

When orders do come in, the crew is sent home to Altus; their help isn't needed with evacuation.

"The (cargo) floor can load 600 people," Nance explains. "But it's not the safest. They may be choosing to bus them instead if there's not a huge need to get people out of here."

And so the crew returns home, landing in Altus about 2 a.m. The landing starts another 12 hours off, whether they'll go on after that is still uncertain. For most, the trip was a walk down memory lane, reminiscent of their earlier days in the Air Force.

"It was pretty typical, each day something different," says Chief Master Sgt. Raymond Brzozowski. "But we don't normally get to help Americans. We're glad to finally use our training to help our own people."

Doing their part

Relief mission to the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast began Sept. 1 at Altus Air Force Base, when two C-17s departed for Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.

Missions have continued since then, helping to evacuate the Biloxi, Miss., area.

A group of airmen have also been deployed to help rebuild Keesler. They include 97th Mission Support Group Commander Col. Linda Medler and Superintendent Chief Master Sgt. Robert Walker, 97th Civil Engineering Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Karl Frerks, and 20 additional members of the Air Education Training Command of the 97th Air Expeditionary Group.



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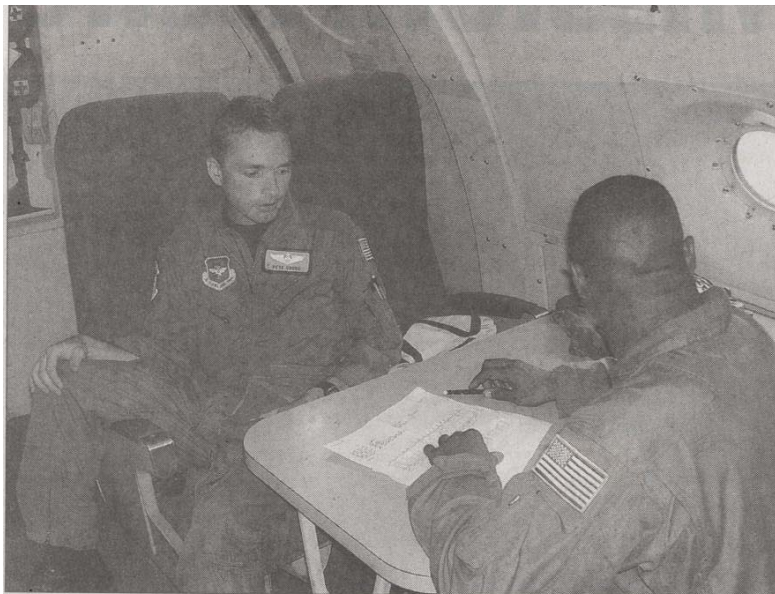


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JARED KALTWASSER/STAFF

Crew members unload rolling cargo using tethers. This was the lightest of cargo that included parcels as large as 9,800-pound pallets, army trucks and trailers. When operating at its maximum, the plane can hold up to 270,000 pounds of cargo.



JARED KALTWASSER/STAFF

Capt. Pete Gross, left, and Tech. Sgt. Tony Brown discuss the load plan for their trip to North Carolina. Load plans are issued with orders, then the plane's loadmasters, including Brown, decide if any changes are necessary before the actual upload of cargo begins. Gross, one of the plane's co-pilots, is a former loadmaster.

"I take it this is
the gulf right
here."

TONY BROWN
TECH SGT.



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General praises CAFB's role in Katrina relief

By Earl Descant
edescant@cdispach.com

Columbus Air Force Base will continue to assist relief efforts on the Gulf Coast by staging helicopters serving the area, Gen. William R. Looney III, commander of Air Education and Training Command based at Randolph Air Force Base in Texas, said in a briefing Thursday.

The helicopters, six UH-1N, or Hueys, along with Helos, which have infrared radar, came to CAFB from Air Force bases in Wyoming, North Dakota and California, and launch from CAFB to travel to the Gulf Coast to help with recovery.

"We're going to fly helicopter pilots down to Keesler so that they don't eat up time between here and Keesler to be able to do their search and recovery missions," said Looney.

"The entire United States Air Force,

along with all of the military services, have been energized to address the disaster we face on the Gulf Coast and New Orleans," Looney added, of the unprecedented joint operation between CAFB and the helicopter division.

In the next few years as the military starts to respond to changes recommended by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, Looney said CAFB's mission will alter but will see no drastic changes.

"The mission at Columbus will change, but not substantially," said Looney, noting the replacement of T-37 aircraft with the new T-6 and the transfer of part of the fighter aircraft program from Moody Air Force Base in Georgia to Columbus.

A new mission support facility and a fitness center also are planned for CAFB, said Looney.

"But it will not be dramatic over and above what we see today," he commented

on the base's future.

Though Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi saw heavy damage from Katrina, particularly in the area of full-time base housing and the first floor of the hospital, Looney said, "It wouldn't surprise me if within six months we were back to training students at Keesler.

"Our biggest challenge will not be our inability to train students, it will be to support and house and provide a quality of life for our permanent full-time instructors. That will be the challenge," added Looney.

"And in the interim, we will train them at Sheppard and Lackland Air Force bases. And so we'll be up to our command within 30 days," he added.

To make CAFB and the rest of the bases in the AETC the best and most desirable assignments and locations, Looney wants to focus on making the job rewarding and improving the quality of life at those bases.

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Choppers flying from CAFB

Helicopters from four different bases in the western United States continue to fly from Columbus Air Force Base daily to provide relief efforts on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Meanwhile, the base still is

home to 170 evacuees from military facilities on the Gulf Coast but the number is dwindling as personnel return to their bases or are reassigned, according to Sonic Johnson, head of public affairs at CAFB.

The helicopters leave in two different shifts in the morning and fly 16 to 20 missions a day from base camps on the Gulf Coast. The helicopters then return to CAFB in the evening, one group at about 6 p.m. and another at about 9 p.m., Johnson said.

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Generals visit CAFB, focus on Air Force's many assets

By Kristin Mamrack
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The multi-pronged capabilities of the U.S. Air Force came together just a few hundred yards apart Friday at Columbus Air Force Base.

In the base's theater, 23 new pilots were told they are "elite but not elitists," by Lt. Gen. Bruce A. Wright, as they received their wings during graduation exercises.

Meanwhile, on the base's busy tarmac, another general was inspecting an Air Force humanitarian mission in the wake of Hurricane Katrina on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

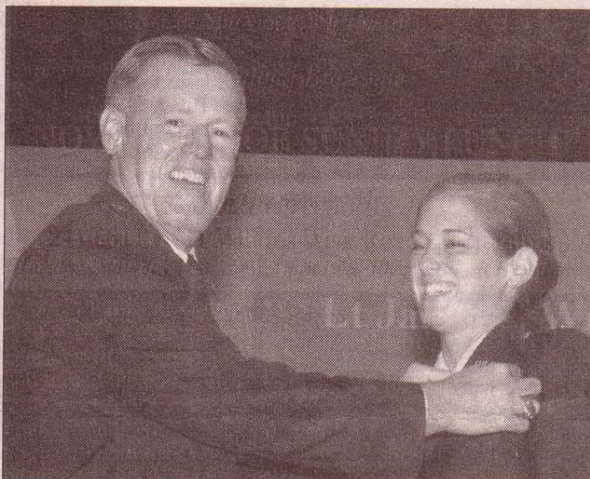
"I want to remind you of what Air Force airmen have done for the world," Wright told the graduates, who included two Japanese students and his daughter, Jaina. "More than 50 million men, women and children in Afghanistan and Iraq have a whole new life before them, a completely transformed life free of tyranny."

"The military did what the Russians couldn't do over almost a 10-year period; they ran the Taliban out of Afghanistan. And the Iraqi Army became just a footnote in history."

"You will soon be conducting similar missions," continued Wright, commander of U.S. forces in Japan and commander of the 5th Air Force at Yokota Air Base in Japan. "While commercial airliners use older pilots like me, our Air Force relies on 25- to 30-year-old captains to deliver U.S. forces and materials anywhere in the world."

As Wright spoke of the military's promise to deliver "24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year," the 83 members of the 620th Air Expeditionary Squadron were gathered in an old building at CAFB near where B-52 bombers once were housed.

The 620th AES, including eight UH-1N "Huey" Iroquois helicopters, is deployed to CAFB to support relief opera-



Airman 1st Class Cecelia Rodriguez/U.S. Air Force
Lt. Gen. Bruce A. Wright pins pilot wings on his daughter, 2nd Lt. Jaina Wright, during graduation exercises Friday at Columbus Air Force Base. The general is commander of U.S. forces in Japan and commander of the 5th Air Force at Yokota Air Base in Japan. His daughter is going to fly the F-15E at Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base in North Carolina.

tions by delivering food, water, ice, ready-to-eat meals and medical supplies to hurricane victims.

The mission represents the first time Air Force Space Command has deployed the helicopters outside their daily mission of intercontinental-ballistic missile field security.

"The helicopters are adaptable and flexible," noted Gen. Lance W. Lord, commander of the Air Force Space Command. "Normally, there are security forces on board but now there are supplies."

Lord and Maj. Gen. Frank Klotz, commander of the 20th Air Force, visited the unit, made up of personnel from F.E. Warren Air Force Base in

Wyoming, Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana, Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

"I'm impressed with the pilots, maintenance and support people stepping up to the mission," Lord said as he crossed the tarmac prior to boarding a plane that would take him to Keesler Air Force Base in Pascagoula. "There has been a wonderful response. They're all fired up." "There's high morale and they're eager to do whatever's required," added Lt. Col. Gary Bontly, the squadron commander. "We were initially here for search and rescue, but then realized we were confined to an area where there were not robust

search and rescue requirements so we just rolled into whatever the requirement was. In this case, it was humanitarian aid."

As of Thursday, the unit had flown 87 sorties totaling 136.8 hours and delivered approximately 41,148 pounds of food.

"As it becomes more routine, we'll see how we do," Lord said, adding the unit decided flying at night was "not a good idea," so pilots instead are flying from CAFB early in the morning until "late in daylight."

"The timing of the mission is indeterminate. We've got synchronized operations going now and we're proud to do it. We'll do it as long as we're directed to," Lord added when asked how long the group would be at CAFB.

The unit also saved the lives of two people working with relief efforts.

"They were both medical evacuations," Bontly said. "They needed evacuations out of the area they were working in to a hospital with better facilities."

A "heart patient" was transferred from an Air Force field hospital to Gulfport and an Air Force lieutenant was transferred to Jackson. "It's so important, what they're doing, and I'm delighted to see how great they're doing," Lord said of the squadron's efforts. "The payoff comes when we off-load the supplies and see the people face-to-face. The looks in their eyes make it all worthwhile. They're grateful to know that their Air Force is here to support them."



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Laughlin AFB, Texas



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DEL RIO NEWS HERALD

Home still on the horizon

[By Bill Sontag](#)

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"I'm going to need to clean every piece of clothing and equipment that was exposed to air and water here in New Orleans," said Capt. Ken Hall, public affairs chief, Laughlin Air Force Base. Monday, Hall received a "tentative re-deploy order," a welcome suggestion that he might be coming home to family, friends and coworkers in Del Rio soon.

Some hours later the possibility was put on hold, though Hall had hoped to mark POW/MIA Recognition Day at Laughlin Friday.

Though floodwaters are receding, albeit gradually, from New Orleans' stately boulevards, once colorful streets and picturesque alleys, the flood now is a rising tide of military personnel. The 82nd Airborne Division, the unit to which Hall is attached, is adding thousands to its strength in the historic Algiers neighborhood across the Mississippi River from the French Quarter.

Sunday, Hall explained that rescue, recovery and security troop strengths are complemented by 1st Cavalry Division units from Fort Hood, Texas. The 82nd, Hall said, will continue waterborne and foot search-and-rescue using Humvees and Zodiac boats. In addition, the troops, multiple agency employees, and volunteers are clearing debris in several parts of the Crescent City, and Hall goes along to satisfy the needs of news media to see the operations.

"I mean, it's such a huge American effort," Hall exclaimed Sunday, adding that it's a "purple suit" occasion. "There are not blue suits here, no green suits. We just think of ourselves as 'purple suits,' all working for the same cause." Another "purple suit" assignment prepared him for such interagency cooperation.

Hall may have been picked for duty in this now melancholy metropolis because of his three-year experience communicating effectively with those who lost loved ones in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Sunday, his wife of 16 years, April Hall, recalled when her husband was assigned to the Joint POW/MIA Command in Hawaii. "He helped people put closure on their losses, and they were very appreciative," said April.

Hall visited New Orleans in its previous life, but the acquaintance was casual, at best. "The city has a particular fascination for me, and that came from being sucked into reading Anne Rice novels, mostly based on settings in New Orleans."

Hall spent time with his brother there, but had little opportunity to "play tourist." Rice's family left New Orleans well ahead of Hurricane Katrina, and now, from San Diego, the author of *The Witching Hour* and *Vampire Chronicles* uses her Web site to plea for donations to humanitarian causes there.

Sunday, Hall's secular work acquired a spiritual connection, as he covered "an awesome, heartwarming story." In Algiers, Reverend James Brown, pastor for 22 years of a modest church and congregation in the old neighborhood, rode out Hurricane Katrina. Before ministering to his little Greater St. Mary Baptist

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AETC News Clips

Laughlin AFB, Texas



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Church, Brown lived in an “upscale” home on the other side of the Mississippi River.

But, in the move to Algiers, his wife’s one passion about their small home was a pair of French doors, traditionally a basic, hinged, wood frame surrounding small panes of glass, top to bottom. Brown sent his wife and children to high, protected ground away from the city, and stayed to battle the storm.

While Katrina’s one hundred forty-miles-per-hour winds raged, Brown held onto the precious doors, trying to keep them from shattering. When exhaustion took him, after five hours of struggle, he gave up. As if yielding was a signal, the winds immediately died, and the doors were left standing. Brown immediately left home and walked to his church’s fellowship hall and set up a food kitchen for survivors.

Later Brown likened the episode to the Book of Genesis, verses 24-30, a scriptural story in which Jacob wrestled with an unrecognized foe, then said, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”

The kitchen operated with candles and flashlights for a few days, then was reinforced with both power and cooks from the 1st Cavalry Division, “making this a robust operation,” Hall said. He escorted CNN New York, ABC Nightline and Good Morning America crews to the church Sunday, and the story was aired on Nightline at midnight Monday.

Since the media broke the story under Hall’s introduction, help has flowed into Greater St. Mary Baptist Church. Hall reported Monday that Michael Martino, mayor of Tuckahoe, N.Y. “wants to throw his city’s full support behind the effort of the pastor’s soup kitchen.” Martino asked for a list of specific food and non-perishable items in need of distribution in Algiers, and promised an 18-wheel semi tractor-trailer to deliver the goods.

Hall noticed another oddity of Hurricane Katrina last week. Seen as another spiritual “sign” in a city so devastated that “signs” are about all that’s left to notice, a statue of Christ survived the storm’s wrath. Nearly hidden in the courtyard behind the landmark St. Louis Cathedral on Jackson Square, old trees collapsed under the stress of wind and rain, crashing all around the statue.

“About all he lost was his thumb and a pinky finger,” Hall said. The 307th Engineer Battalion of the 82nd Airborne Division cleaned up debris on the site, ensuring no further damage came to the statue.

April Hall, first grade teacher at The Little Schoolhouse, is not surprised at what Ken notices under such circumstances. “At first, I was pretty nervous, afraid of the rising water when he left, and the diseases. But, it’s a little bit of an opportunity for him, because he really likes to help.”

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AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.




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THE WORLD AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES REACH OUT

RA-76363

Little Rock Air Force Base cargo handlers unload aid-relief supplies from a Russian plane.



TO THE RESCUE

Relief pours into LRAFB

On the tarmac at Little Rock Air Force Base, a C-130 from Egypt sits side-by-side with an Israeli El Al 747, both having discharged emergency hurricane relief aid headed to Louisiana and Mississippi, part of a virtual United Nations of air transports.

By Friday, 24 foreign relief flights had landed at the base, designated as the hub for international relief, according to Lt Jon Quinlan, a base spokesman. He said another eight inbound flights were scheduled.

The base had received 1,000 tons of relief supplies as of Friday morning, he said.

STORY BY JOHN HOFHEIMER
PHOTO BY DAVID SCOLLI

In Brussels, Belgium, Friday, member nations voted to use NATO ships and aircraft to hurry aid to the hurricane victims, according to published reports.

Using converted passenger aircraft, this will be the first time the new NATO Response Force has been used for a humanitarian mission.

Other countries sending emergency relief to Little Rock Air Force Base most recently included China, Russia, Denmark, India, Thailand and Tunisia.

Meanwhile, the base's C-130s have

flown 30 missions in Operation Katrina, including the delivery of supplies and Guardsmen and transport of 206 evacuees, according to Quinlan.

The 314th Airlift Wing has 38 airmen deployed into the area, he said.

"The Air Force is happy to take this cargo on and participate in support of Operation Katrina," said Quinlan. "This is a testament of the importance of the base."

A 747 with 100 tons of goods from China arrived Wednesday and included bedding, clothes, tents and generators.

"This was a chance to show our sym-

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Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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Above, General Joseph Rabeiser talks to Russian airmen and the Egyptian representative. Evercom is the Russian equivalent of FEMA. Above right, planes bearing the flag of the Arab Republic of Egypt land at the base and wait to be unloaded. Below, aircraft from the Arab Republic of Egypt lay on pallets in the cargo preparation area waiting to be shipped out to hurricane-ravaged areas on civilian trucks. At right, aegreos leader Mark Dezer from the Royal Air Force loads to cargo.

► Rescue

Continued from Page 1A
pathy and support and to show that we're standing with Americans," China Consul General Hu Yeshun said.

The location of Little Rock Air Force Base and its milit experience make receiving the international aid missions possible. Brig Gen. Joseph M. Rabeiser said during his first visit as 34th Airlift Wing commander.

"We have a great location plus we have the infrastructure here at Little Rock Air Force Base," Rabeiser said.

"We have a huge ramp and we have people who are trained to off load planes. Our airmen at Little Rock Air Force Base continuously train to move people and supplies. This life-saving effort puts our training into action by helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"Our airmen have played a vital role in this process and are working hard to provide relief to our Southern neighbors."



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AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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DEL RIO NEWS HERALD

LAFB officer afloat on New Orleans' waters

[By Bill Sontag](#)

Published September 12, 2005, p. 1

From Algiers Point, a 287-year-old neighborhood that overlooks the famed New Orleans French Quarter, Capt. Ken Hall briefly flipped on a light in his vehicle Sunday night to make note of a News-Herald E-mail address.

The 37-year-old Air Force officer is accustomed to media requests, and is in the thick of them in the devastated Crescent City.

Hall, public affairs chief at Laughlin Air Force Base, was deployed from Laughlin last week, ostensibly headed for the badly damaged Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. Instead, he ended up at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, coordinating media activities for the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division Joint Task Force – Katrina.

The airport is nearly cleaned up after Hurricane Katrina's devastating mess, and now slated to reopen for limited air traffic Tuesday.

"Home" is hardly a description for Hall's residence now at the Algiers Naval Support Activity, a historic military base south of the Mississippi River, and west of its wide, levied bend that forms the bowl of New Orleans.

"It's a little Spartan," Hall said of his current living conditions, a likely understatement considering his 13 years as a Marine before he joined the Air Force to become an officer.

Meals for the 82nd and for Hall and other Air Force public affairs officers are typically MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), but an occasional hot meal is a welcome relief.

Hall's colleagues attached to the 82nd include Air Force public affairs chiefs, ranging from lieutenants to lieutenant colonels, from Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., Shepard Air Force Base, Texas, Robins Air Force Base, Ga., Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., and Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.

Bedding consists of a sleeping bag, no cots.

Showers are communal.

"That's an understatement," Hall chuckled about competition for a brief, brisk dousing now and then.

"Just out of courtesy, I think, most folks are taking one every second or third day, but, really, living conditions are secondary in everybody's mind here."

Hall works daily with national network news crews, and the exposure has taken him to now legendary landmarks of the disaster.

Saturday, he escorted CNN New York commentators and camera operators into a part of New Orleans called Lakeview before it actually became a dirty lake.

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AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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For three hours the party followed San Diego firefighters, house-to-house, on waterborne search-and-rescue.

"We made a lot of noise to see if anyone responded at every house," Hall explained. If none, the firefighter used a chainsaw to carve through the roof to begin a search of everything above the water line.

CNN reporter Tara Rosenblum wore protective clothing on the excursion, and declined to keep it when the trip was completed.

"She was so affected by it all that she left her hip waders in Lakeview. She was afraid to take them home," said Hall.

Environmental conditions leave a lot to be desired, as so vividly described on television by the very media Hall is escorting. In his interpretation, what floats the boats is neither attractive nor safe.

"The water is rancid, and the fumes off of it are nauseous, but they are our 'air.'" Hall wears protective gloves during raft or boat trips. "I've heard of people being chemically burned just on contact with the floodwater, particularly near old chemical plants."

Temperatures and humidity, both in the low- to mid-90s, do nothing to mitigate the smell of sewage, fuel, and general rot in which the city is cloaked.

Last week, Hall guided CBS News and Fox News crews into the now empty New Orleans Superdome. The crews are "imbedded" with the 82nd Airborne.

"We were told we were the first media to go in there," Hall said, explaining that the purpose of the visit was for health inspectors to "look around" and develop recommendations for the domed stadium.

As Hall escorted media, federal agents with shotguns escorted the party.

Still, Hall feels images of rampant and continuing scofflaw gangs have received too much airtime and play in the media.

"The reported state of lawlessness is grossly exaggerated. But, that being said there is criminal activity that takes place."

As floodwaters recede, Humvees replace Zodiac boats as the mode of transportation for more of Hall's excursions with officials and media representatives.

Recently, his crew was hailed by a pair, "about college age, probably in their 20s," who asked to be evacuated. The couple and their dog were loaded up and taken to the New Orleans Convention Center.

"There they were first patted down for weapons by National Guard troops, and sent to medical triage for shots," Hall said.

What happens next is beyond Hall's experience.

"I've seen some leaving on gurneys with IVs, and some just riding away in buses. Those that are non-ambulatory are loaded on helicopters for transportation to Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, and then airlifted to other locations.

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AETC News Clips

Little Rock AFB, Ark.



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"I have no idea where they're airlifted to. Just away from here."

Since the evacuations began when transportation finally became available after Katrina's ravaging visit, more than 25,000 residents have been airlifted.

"They've been triaged at the airport, and a combination of Air Force and Army medical teams have even had makeshift operating rooms at the airport," Hall said.

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AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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Officials: Local disaster plan good, could be better

The Enid News and Eagle

12 September, 2005

By Robert Barron Staff Writer

The city of New Orleans experienced chaos last week after local, state and federal help did not materialize as soon as expected for victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Enid's emergency management director says that should not happen in Enid -- to an extent -- and an emergency plan already is in place.

"Enid is prepared for what is most probable to hit us. We are not prepared for a disaster the magnitude of New Orleans," said Joey Slater, emergency management director for the city of Enid.

Slater said if Enid reaches its maximum in resources -- involving people, goods and dollars -- a disaster declaration is prepared and waiting for the mayor's signature.

The emergency declaration can be faxed or the state can be contacted before receiving the letter, and help will be on the way. The declaration activates all resources of the state, including National Guard, he said.

If the governor believes the situation will overwhelm state resources, he will ask for a declaration of emergency from the federal government.

All of these things can be done quickly, with paperwork following up later, Slater said.

"I think we have a good enough working relationship with the state emergency management folks that they would respond," he said.

Working as a team

In developing a disaster reaction plan, Slater works closely with Mike Honigsberg, Garfield County emergency manager.

Honigsberg agrees the procedures are in place, but he also does not think the area is prepared for a major disaster of the type that struck the Gulf Coast.

He said he is planning a meeting of emergency managers and other officials to discuss the worst-case scenario and establish some flexible guidelines.

"In the aftermath of a major hit there are a lot of things we need," he said, adding the "hit" could be tornado, flood or anything affecting the amount of people and resources that creates a major disaster.

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AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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What went wrong

One problem in New Orleans was Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco waited 24 hours to assess the situation before requesting federal assistance, Slater said.

"We can always call the state and post them by phone," Slater said.

In New Orleans, Honigsberg said, the buck has to stop with the local officials, the emergency management director and the mayor.

"Those plans are there for a reason. You have to pay attention and protect your people," he said.

The federal government cannot come into an area until the state asks for federal help. That's what the declarations are about, Slater said.

During the ice storm of 2002, the northwest Oklahoma area was declared a disaster area.

"I prepared (a disaster declaration request) last winter when it looked like we were going to have an ice storm during the weekend, but it didn't happen," Slater said.

Slater said it was a mistake for Blanco to wait 24 hours.

"The top elected officials in the city and the parish and the governor have the responsibility to get additional resources," he said.

Been there, done that

Despite the fact Enid sits in the midst of tornado alley, flooding is the number one disaster on the local emergency master plan.

Enid suffered through a severe flood in 1973 when Boggy Creek overflowed its banks and a large part of Enid's lowland area was under water, including portions of St. Mary's hospital facilities.

There were nine fatalities in that flood,.

The system is in place

During a disaster, the emergency management director assists the mayor or city manager with decisions and gathering of key people. Declaring an emergency is ultimately the mayor's decision.

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AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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Slater works from the emergency operations center in the basement of the city administration building, and Enid National Guard Armory has been selected as an alternative location in the event the city building is destroyed.

Enid also works closely with Vance Air Force Base emergency crews. They have a direct line to Vance Crisis Action Center, Slater said.

Assessment and requests for assistance flows from the bottom up.

In the event of a tornado, storm spotters are alert to the severity of the storms they watch. Sheriff's deputies and police and fire personnel are called out to areas damaged.

"We also need cooperation from the Red Cross and Salvation Army and a pre-arrangement with churches who have kitchens for shelters for people. Then we will worry about getting food to them," Honigsberg said.

The system is in place, but both emergency management directors say they hope they never have to know how well it will work.



AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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Yearly fund-raising efforts are under way for United Way

The Enid News and Eagle

11 September, 2005

By Scott Fitzgerald / Staff Writer

Preparation for this year's United Way Campaign includ that thankfully didn't materialize.

"When we began our campaign, setting our goals and getting our Pacesetter firms, doing the footwork, we had do this in February and the BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) decision had not been made yet," said April Danahy, this year's chairwoman for the United Way of Enid and Northwest Oklahoma campaign that raises money every fall throughout the community for its 15 service agencies.

Vance Air Force Base survived being placed on the closure list three months later, much to the relief of the entire northwest Oklahoma community.

That waiting period caused some anxiety, however.

"We, the executive committee, had to be realistic and ask, 'What if?' We went ahead planning as if the base wasn't going to close, but we did have a contingency plan. We were very thankful that we didn't have to have that (base closure) as an option this year," Danahy said.

The importance of having reliable and strong social service agencies hits everyone throughout the country this year in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

American Red Cross and Salvation Army are United Way member agencies.

People in Enid and the surrounding area know first-hand the value of service these agencies provide.

"When you think about the Red Cross or Salvation Army or any of our agencies that respond to a natural or man-made disasters, you have to look no further than our ice storm in 2002. Agencies localized and mobilized quickly, providing shelter and locations of electricity for many," Danahy said.

The hurricane struck an area more than 800 miles away from Enid, but United Way member agencies sprung into action immediately.

"You can tell what a lending hand they can give to a sister agency in another part of the country. We're acting locally on a national level," Danahy said about the effort here to assist Katrina victims.

This year's campaign goal is \$655,000 which is a \$5,000 increase from the previous year.

In 2004, United Way volunteers raised \$680,000. It was a "special year," said executive director Allan McCobb about the record amount that shattered a 1985 campaign amount of \$677,000.

When McCobb uses the word "special," he refers to the fact that in 2004 five business owners who wished to remain anonymous pledged \$25,000 as part of a matching fund for new dollars raised in the campaign. That added about \$50,000 to the campaign.

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AETC News Clips

Vance AFB, Okla.



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Matching fund amounts are not benchmarks every year, so the need to raise a little extra this year was necessary, McCobb said.

Some of the means to raise campaign money this year are similar to what outgoing campaign chairman Chad Dillingham utilized a year earlier — such as retaining more loan executives to assist in-house business coordinators with their campaigns.

Loan executives will be accompanied by agency heads in visiting individual businesses to answer any employee questions that arise about donating, McCobb said.

“The big thing we rely on every year are our in-house coordinators. They are the ones who coordinate the in-house (business) campaigns. We rely realistically on about 200 of these volunteers every year,” McCobb said.

The popular community chili cook-off will be Oct. 21 in the Cherokee Strip Conference Center. This year’s theme is “It’s Your Fantasy.”

Danahy said United Way campaign volunteers are hoping to finish their campaign drives by Oct. 31.



AETC News Clips

Tyndall AFB, Fla.



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Tyndall disaster unit skirts red tape

By Faith Ford
News Herald Writer 522-5114 / fford@pcnh.com

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE

From earthquake-shaken Iran to war-torn Kosovo, and now, Katrina-stricken Louisiana and Mississippi, the calls for help come in from around the world.

"It almost feels like if someone dials 9-1-1, it rings on our desk," said Wayland Patterson, a civilian and one of the voices on the end of the line at the U.S. Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency, or AFCESA, at Tyndall Air Force Base.

Patterson is among a handful of Tyndall-based managers for the Air Force Contract Augmentation Program known as AFCAP.

When assistance is needed in the event of a disaster like Hurricane Katrina, the emergency response program cuts through the usual red tape to speed up the contracting process and get non-military aid in fast.

Since its inception in 1997, AFCAP has grown to provide more than \$1 billion in aid for customers including federal, state and local government agencies. Funding from different entities funnels through the contract program to private industry.

"We get the requirement from the customer. We make sure it fits. Then we send it over to contracting with the money from the customer," said Senior Master Sgt. Garry Berry, the program manager.

AFCAP managers at Tyndall, Patterson said, were on the line with the Keesler Air Force Base command center as Katrina rushed the Gulf Coast more than two weeks ago. Keesler is located about a block from the coast in Biloxi, Miss.

Damage estimates at the base run as high as \$500 million.

The Air Force has requested \$34.1 million in relief through AFCAP. As of Tuesday morning, Berry said 258 responders had been sent to the area, care of the program's primary contractor, Panama City-based Readiness Management Support.

Responders are working on everything from roof repairs to mold removal and detailed damage assessment on residential structures and office space. It took about a year and a half for the base to recover after Hurricane Georges hit in 1998.

"I would say you could probably double that this time," Patterson said.

In addition to work at the installation, \$1.1 million in food services is being provided through AFCAP at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

Patterson said a number of other requests have come in such as building a 4,000-person camp in Gulfport, Miss.

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